

attributed to a number of causes such as a change in climate and food, times of disease, contact with other peoples, or a trek to the east which would leave behind smaller communities. These latter would of course have to devote their full time to the hunt, and thus neglect those things such as art, which distinguished this Bering Sea culture, and set them above others insofar as cultural achievement was concerned.

The next cultural development was that of the Dorset Eskimo.<sup>4</sup> They may have been contemporaneous with the Bering Sea culture, however it is unlikely. All indications are that they were much later. Probably a migration of some of the Bering Sea Eskimos produced this new culture once it had reached across the northern coast of Alaska and penetrated into the Canadian Arctic. In many respects we still do not know much more about this culture than when it was first discovered a little over 30 years ago. Probably one of the most important discoveries since its identification is in the present excavation of the old ruins near Igloolik.<sup>5</sup> In 1939 Col. Graham W. Rowley excavated houses here, and since that time has aroused quite a lot of interest amongst archaeologists concerning the richness of this Dorset culture. The culture probably developed about 2,000 years ago. They had adapted themselves to hunting sea mammals, especially the walrus. During the early stages they seem to have concentrated on making specific implements, but later developed several harpoon heads which bore a distinctive Dorset emphasis. And with the growth of the people a distinctive art developed and flourished in which conventional forms seem to take on special meanings, almost always connected with the hunt.

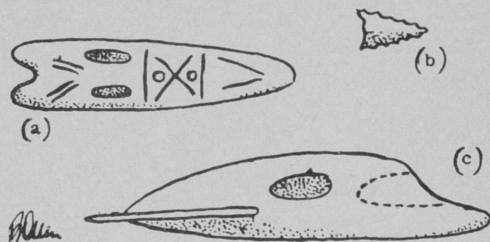


Fig. 1—Dorset artifacts showing strong Bering Sea cultural influence: caribou antler spear head; flint head; walrus ivory harpoon head.

The present day Eskimos have many stories about these people who were living in the Arctic up until a few hundred years ago. At first, archaeologists and students of Eskimo culture tended to discard them as being interesting and good stories without any basis. We have just recently come to realize that the "Tunik"<sup>6</sup> as the Eskimos called them, were actually the Dorsets, whose culture was brought to a close by a change in climate, disease and sickness, and finally by slaughter at the hands of the direct ancestors of the present day Eskimos. The Eskimos never had a written language, and it is interesting to note that they have recorded a certain amount of their history through their story telling. Certain stories require proper telling and throughout the ages have been handed down very carefully by people who specialized in story-telling. Thus, they have remained unchanged to the degree that the basic truths upon which they were built are still incorporated. So we now find that to an extent we have a living witness to support our quest of knowledge of early Eskimo cultures.

The Dorset culture seems to have found its roots in the coastal regions of the Central Arctic, and to have worked its way to Baffin Island, where it flourished by hunting mammals of the sea. During the final period however, there is evidence that the weather became much colder, and at this time a new culture which had just come out of Alaska found

<sup>4</sup> So named by Diamond Jenness, in 1925, based on his examination of artifacts dug up at Cape Dorset, N.W.T., by Eskimos.

<sup>5</sup> Meldgaard, Jorgen. *Eskimoiske stenalderskulturer i Arktisk Canada* (Polarboken, 1955. p. 113-27, illus., map.)

<sup>6</sup> Mansell, G. A. "Tunik", (RCMP *Quarterly*, Apr. 1952. v. 17, no. 4, p. 333-37, illus.)